

## Vinita Voogd Mastering the Fine Art of Printing

By KUMUD MOHAN

**L**aguna Beach Arts festival, California, 1982: The sight was unbelievable! Thousands of people—viewing works of art from far and near—selecting some, rejecting some, coming back again to view a few more times.

Vinita Voogd, barely six months into marriage, had accompanied her connoisseur mother-in-law to the beach. “I never imagined in my wildest dreams that one day I, too, would be amongst the artists displaying and selling their works on Laguna Beach,” she says.

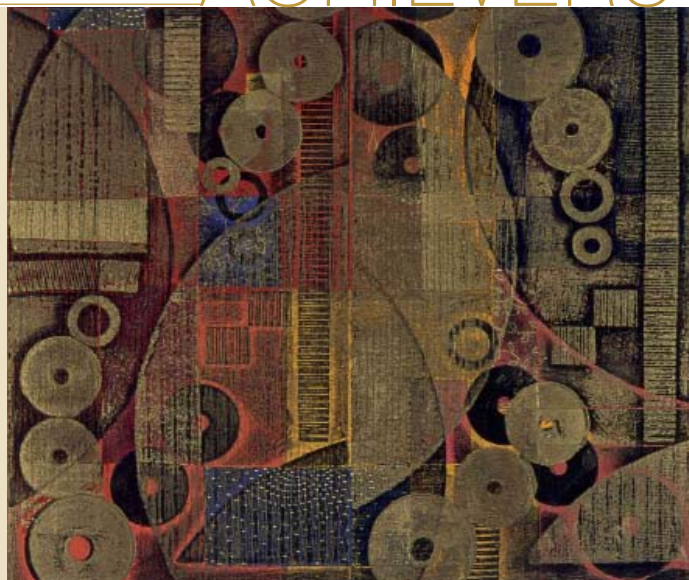
In fact, 49-year-old Voogd is among the rare artists who have been invited to exhibit their works for six consecutive years at the Laguna Beach Arts Festival. She repeated her success by displaying her work at the festival this summer. Now an American citizen, Voogd exhibits and sells fine prints in the United States.

“Actually, printmaking always fascinated me as a student when I saw others specializing in that subject while I was studying for my Bachelor’s degree in Fine Arts at the College of Art, New Delhi, in the late ’70s,” she says. “I could follow my dream soon after marriage in December 1981 when I discovered that the University of California, Irvine—offering a course in printing—was very close to Huntington

Beach, where my husband, Maarten Voogd, was manufacturing small fiberglass boats. What I did not know was that in the bargain I was getting the opportunity to be taught by the best-known printmaking teacher in the U.S., John Paul Jones.”

Voogd went on to work with William Riley at Saddleback College, California, in 1993. She served as president of the Los Angeles Printmaking Society from 2002 to 2004. Voogd has given lectures and demonstrations on printmaking at institutions such as the Palos Verdes Art Center, Saddleback College, Orange Coast College and Irvine Art Center. Besides the annual summer Arts Festival at Laguna Beach, she has participated in international art shows such as the Lanterns of the East: International Exhibit at Angels Gate in San Pedro, California in 2002, and the Summer 2003 Seoul, South Korea Group show with selected printmakers of the United States, Japan, Korea and Europe.

What is the secret of her success? “Maybe it is the labor of love,” smiles Voogd. The collagraph technique (referring to a combination of collage and graphics) which she uses for printmaking is a laborious and time-consuming one. Voogd—an intrepid environmentalist—collects all sorts of discarded material



Photographs courtesy Kumud Mohan



Above: A collagraph made by Vinita Voogd (left).

like buttons, clips and varieties of wrapping paper during her travels around the world. These she selects with much thought, arranges esthetically and pastes carefully in several layers to make a single collagraph or plate. She uses *Nori*, a special acid-free archival wheat starch glue (which will last for a few hundred years without damage or deterioration) obtained from Japan.

The collagraph is covered by a process known as *gessoing* to hold ink. It is then passed several times through an etching press consisting of a pair of rollers—the same method Rembrandt used for his prints 500 years ago—with different colors to obtain a translucent effect. It requires nearly a month to prepare a set of three to four plates which Voogd uses to make a series of prints. No two images made from these collagraphs are identical. The subtle and recurrent usage of American motifs fused with typ-

ically Indian colors such as *rani* pink, *Firozi* turquoise and *Gerua* (brick) red—embellished with gold or silver—make her work uniquely different and appealing. Voogd has sold more than 100 of her original fine prints.

“Her works are on display at prominent places like the Laguna Art Museum and Hotel Bel Air,” says her husband, proudly. “I think it is remarkable to be able to take such great strides in your art while being a caring wife and mother at the same time.”

“Having an Indian mom is different from other moms in the U.S.,” notes Voogd’s 20-year-old son, Jacob, studying psychology at St. Mary’s College, California. “When I tell Mom I’ll be back at 11.30, I make sure I’m back by 11.30...I think Mom is strict in a very fair way.”

“We’ve picked up a lot of discipline from her,” adds her 22-year-old daughter, Lauren, who has studied cooking and music at Saddleback College. “We’re proud to have an Indian mother.”

**Kumud Mohan** is a freelance writer and photojournalist based in New Delhi.